DIPLOMATIC MEMORANDUM

CONFIDENTIAL

Date: August 14, 1962 (14th of Av, 5722)

From: Consul, Atlanta

To: Mr. H. Bar-On, Washington

Reference: 106.2/251.16, 17/8

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Copies to: Ambassador, Washington; North America Division, The Office; Public Affairs, The Office; Mr. A. Yafe, New York

SUBJECT: Invitation to Reverend Martin Luther King

Further to the exchange of correspondence on this matter.

In light of recent developments in Albany where Reverend Martin Luther King and his movement stand at the center, I do not believe the time is appropriate for his visit to Israel, and these are the considerations:

a. King represents the militant wing of the civil rights movement, with which very important bodies within it, such as the N.A.A.C.P., are not in agreement and oppose his methods.

b. As is known, I value highly the creation of contacts with the Negro leadership, and I have expressed more than once in reports the opinion that the number of supporters of non-violent activism among Negroes is growing and that King's star is rising in the firmament of Negro leadership.

c. The Albany events, his arrest, etc., have given King worldwide publicity. At the same time, he has also concentrated against himself the fury of all opponents of desegregation, including moderate circles and the indignation of Negroes.

d. An invitation to King to visit a foreign country - whatever the inviting body may be - will be interpreted here as an expression of support or sympathy for him and will arouse sharp negative reactions. In any case,

we should not be the first country to grant King, as it were, international status.

e. An invitation by the Histadrut does not change this assessment because (1) King is not a labor leader and is not a union official (2) The central position of the Histadrut in Israel is well known.

f. Contrary to my personal preference in this matter, I must warn that King's visit to Israel at this stage is harmful to our image and our work in the American South, whereas the benefit is doubtful and is still "a vision for an appointed time."

g. In light of the circumstances, it is doubtful whether King will conduct a visit to Israel in the fall as Mr. Avrech conveyed. In any case, I recommend in the strongest terms to refrain from raising the question of his visit, and to shelve the matter until an opportune time.

Our public diplomacy efforts with the various elements in the Negro community must be done here and without ostentatious publicity.

Ze'ev Z. Dober